

FILE A – For Optional Classroom Use

English Language Arts:
Released Writing Prompt A-2

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English Language Arts: Released Writing Prompt

You find a strange invention. Describe what it looks like and what it does.

NOTE: Each student's total writing score includes a response to this prompt **and** the reading/writing response item based on the story found on page A-20.

English Language Arts: Released Reading Items

Should your school tell you what to wear?

Kids debate school dress codes and uniforms.

When you go shopping for back-to-school clothes, how much choice do you have? For more and more kids, the answer is “less and less.” That’s because a growing number of schools now require students to wear uniforms or follow strict dress codes.

School officials claim that when kids are “dressed up,” they take themselves—and school—more seriously, and focus less on the latest fashion trends. Do uniforms and dress codes really make better students? Are they fair? We asked our Z-Team what they thought.

Clothes Can Be a Problem

Many kids we interviewed agree that clothes can be distracting. For one thing, they say, kids are sometimes excluded if they can’t afford to follow fashion trends or buy expensive brands.

“The ‘cool’ group at our school has their own dress code,” says Elisabeth, 10. “You have to wear clothes by big designers and brand names, or you’re out.”

Some kids bully others because of what they wear, reports Matt Shorten, 11. “One group at my school thinks guys should always wear baggy pants. If you don’t, they might laugh at you. But then if you do, they call you a poser,” which means pretending to be something you’re not.

When kids are teased about their clothes, Elisabeth says, “they might feel so bad they can’t concentrate on schoolwork.” Even the *possibility* of being teased can be distracting. Kids can waste a lot of time worrying, “Are my clothes OK today?” says Kristen, 15.

Even worse, in some schools a few kids wear certain colors or sports emblems to show gang membership. Other kids have to be careful about what they wear, so they

don’t send the wrong message—and end up getting hurt.

To combat these problems, some principals are trying to fight back. Their weapons of choice: dress codes and uniforms.

Are Dress Codes the Answer?

Dress codes usually list what a school *doesn’t* allow kids to wear. Things that often make the “forbidden” list include:

- “Skimpy” clothes, like bare-midriff or tank

- tops, and short skirts or shorts.

- Shirts or hats with obscene pictures or sayings. Also

- ones that promote alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes.

- Some schools even ban specific trendy styles, like baggy pants, spiked or dyed hair, or earrings for boys.

Some of the kids we interviewed thought *all* dress-code rules were a drag. “What you wear shouldn’t be up to your school, or to anyone for that matter except you!” asserts Samantha, 13.

Others just had problems with specific rules. “Why no sandals without socks? It’s not like it’s that big a deal,” argues Ranga, 11. And Karlie, 13, adds, “We should be allowed to wear holey jeans.”

But many of the kids we spoke to had no problem with their schools’ dress codes. “It’s just common sense,” says Val, 15. “It keeps you from baring too much skin or wearing clothes that are inappropriate for school.”



Are Uniforms the Answer?

The latest trend in “enforced fashion” is school uniforms. In a recent survey of public-school principals in 10 states, about one in 10 said their schools had uniforms. Another one in 6 said they might require uniforms soon.

Uniforms are especially popular in large cities, where schools count on them to create a sense of order and to banish “gang colors.”

Many of the kids we spoke to agree that there’s a positive side to uniforms. They say that uniforms:

- *Save time.* “You don’t have to destroy your closet looking for something cool to wear,” says Rebecca, 13.
- *Save bucks.* “I wish my school had uniforms. I would save a lot of money,” says Emily Breidbart, 13.
- *Save “face.”* “Everyone is wearing the same thing, so no one is laughed at,” Rebecca says.
- *Shift the focus to your personality.* “Uniforms allow people to see you for who you are, not for what clothes you can afford,” says Eric, 14.
- *Inspire better behavior.* “You feel like you’re in a professional environment,” says Will, 15. Everyone behaves better, he adds, so it’s easier to focus on learning.
- *Still leave room for individual style.* In winter, Jomi, 11, wears brightly colored striped tights. Emily Benjamin, 15, notes

that her friends who wear uniforms “can still wear jewelry, nail polish, and hair bows.” B.J., 14, can put together a different “uniform” each day—as long as all the clothing is blue, white, or khaki.

What About Freedom of Choice?

But other kids give uniforms a thumbs-down, saying that they:

- *Squash a form of personal expression.* Jessie, 11, collected 100 signatures on a “no uniforms” petition when she heard her school district might adopt them. “Everyone should have the right to be different,” she explains. “One part of that is how you’re dressed.”
- *Are not fashionable.* Even Rebecca, who loves her uniform, says, “uniforms do look nerdy.”
- *Are not designed for comfort.* You really have to get used to them, reports Matt Sweeney, 13.
- *Can’t force kids to behave better.* Even though kids get teased a lot at his school, Matt Shorten doesn’t think uniforms would solve the problem. “They’d think of some other way to heckle you,” he says. “They’d say you’re too tall or have big ears or something.”

So, are dress codes or uniforms worth it? Should your school control what you wear? Think about it the next time you get dressed!



1. The MAIN purpose of this article is to
 - ☐ A. convince you to want to wear uniforms.
 - ☐ B. convince you that uniforms are a bad idea.
 - ☐ C. help you make up your mind about uniforms.
 - ☐ D. tell you about uniform use in big-city schools.
2. School principals MAINLY want dress codes or school uniforms so that students will
 - ☐ A. wear designer clothes.
 - ☐ B. focus on learning.
 - ☐ C. not belong to gangs.
 - ☐ D. not skip school.
3. In the phrase, “kids are sometimes excluded if they can’t afford to follow fashion trends,” what does excluded mean?
 - ☐ A. embarrassed
 - ☐ B. kicked out of school
 - ☐ C. excited
 - ☐ D. left out of a group
4. The section of this article titled “Clothes Can Be a Problem” is MOSTLY about
 - ☐ A. how much trouble kids have deciding what to wear to school.
 - ☐ B. reasons schools are requiring uniforms or dress codes.
 - ☐ C. the problems of gangs in schools.
 - ☐ D. the high cost of buying school clothes.
5. How do the kids quoted in this article feel about uniforms and dress codes?
 - ☐ A. All of the kids like them.
 - ☐ B. All of the kids do not like them.
 - ☐ C. Some of the kids like them and some do not.
 - ☐ D. The kids have no opinion.
6. Which statement BEST explains why some kids dislike dress codes?
 - ☐ A. Only you should decide what you wear.
 - ☐ B. Baggy pants are fun to wear.
 - ☐ C. Uniforms look nerdy.
 - ☐ D. Dress codes are common sense.

10. Your principal is trying to decide if kids at your school should wear uniforms. Write a letter to the principal explaining why you feel uniforms should or should not be required. Use information from the article to support your position.

10.

[illegible]

Every Time I Climb a Tree

by David McCord

Every time I climb a tree
Every time I climb a tree
Every time I climb a tree
I scrape a leg
Or skin a knee
And every time I climb a tree
I find some ants
Or dodge a bee
And get the ants
All over me

And every time I climb a tree
Where have you been?
They say to me
But don't they know that I am free
Every time I climb a tree?
I like it best
To spot a nest
That has an egg
Or maybe three

And then I skin
The other leg
But every time I climb a tree
I see a lot of things to see
Swallows rooftops and TV
And all the fields and farms there be
Every time I climb a tree
Though climbing may be good for ants
It isn't awfully good for pants
But still it's pretty good for me
Every time I climb a tree

Climbing

by Aileen Fisher

The trunk of a tree
is the road for me
on a sunny summer day.
Up the bark
that is brown and dark
through tunnels of leaves that sway
and tickle my knees
in the trembly breeze,
that's where I make my way.

Leaves in my face
and twigs in my hair
in a squeeze of a place,
but I don't care!

Some people talk
of a summer walk
through clover and weeds and hay.

Some people stride
where the hills are wide
and the rocks are speckled gray.

But the trunk of a tree
is the road for me
on a sunny summer day.

11. In "Every Time I Climb a Tree," one problem the speaker has is he
- ☐ A. breaks birds' eggs.
 - ☐ B. trips on TV wires.
 - ☐ C. scratches his legs.
 - ☐ D. gets twigs in his hair.
12. What is the MAIN reason the speaker of "Every Time I Climb a Tree" likes to climb trees?
- ☐ A. It makes him feel free.
 - ☐ B. He likes ants and bees.
 - ☐ C. He wants to see how high he can go.
 - ☐ D. He likes to steal birds' eggs.
13. When the speaker of "Climbing" says that she is "in a squeeze of a place," she means that the place is
- ☐ A. frightening.
 - ☐ B. funny.
 - ☐ C. small.
 - ☐ D. roomy.
14. At the end of "Climbing," what does the speaker mean when she says, "But the trunk of a tree/is the road for me"?
- ☐ A. She has fun walking in the woods.
 - ☐ B. She is careless and likes to live dangerously.
 - ☐ C. She would rather climb a tree than go for a walk.
 - ☐ D. She is jealous of people who climb hilly roads.

15. Explain the similarities and differences between the two poems. Use examples from each poem to support your explanation.

15.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

BE A JUNK FOOD DETECTIVE

When you go to your favorite fast-food restaurant and order a burger and french fries, do you think about what comes with them? We don't mean the pickles, onions, and special sauce—we mean the wrappers, bags, and other things you'll throw away. Let's take a look.

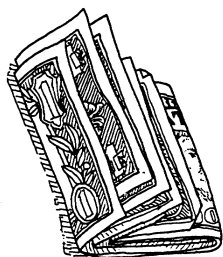
What You'll Need

- A few friends
- Some money to buy lunch
- A list of fast-food restaurants you can walk or ride your bike to

What To Do

1. To do this experiment right, you'll need to get fast-food from several restaurants.

- To make this easy (and as cheap as possible), each person in your group will buy her or his lunch at a different restaurant.



- Buy about the same thing at each restaurant. Then you can really compare sandwiches with sandwiches, cold drinks with cold drinks, and dessert with dessert.

2. Okay, now go buy the food. Take it with you from restaurant to restaurant, but keep the food from each restaurant separate.
3. After you go to the last restaurant, take all the bags of food home and eat lunch. But don't throw the paper wrapping, cups, napkins, salt, plastic forks or spoons, Styrofoam hamburger cartons, french fries containers, and all the other garbage away. Put it aside and—this is important—keep the stuff you got from each restaurant separate.

4. Now sort through it all. Figure out which restaurants sold you the most garbage with your lunch. Figure out which ones sold you the least. Are you surprised at how much there is? Imagine that millions of people buy the same food—and get the same garbage—every single day. What a mess! What a waste!

What You Discover

We create a lot of garbage, even when we don't mean to. That's one of the big reasons we're running out of places to put it. But what can we do about it?

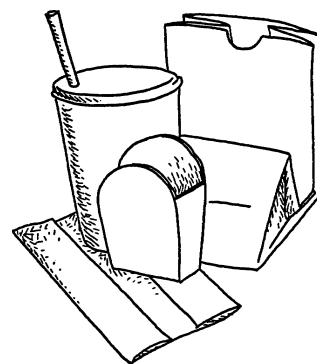
Well, we could stop eating at fast-food restaurants.

But what if we like fast food? What do we do then?

Maybe we could just go to fast-food restaurants that sell us the least garbage, or that recycle it.

But what if those restaurants aren't our favorites? What do we do then?

You see, it's not always easy to decide what to do. In order to save the Earth, we often have to make tough choices. But then... what other choice do we have if we really care?



16. A junk food detective is a person who

- ☐ A. decides what junk food is good and what is bad.
- ☐ B. likes junk food and can always find it.
- ☐ C. can find the best places to buy junk food.
- ☐ D. looks at the trash after eating junk food.

17. What term does the author use in the article to mean the same as “junk food”?

- ☐ A. fast food
- ☐ B. food cartons
- ☐ C. paper wrapping
- ☐ D. garbage

18. Which words could be used to describe how the sections in the article are organized?

- ☐ A. activities, food, tips
- ☐ B. supplies, activities, observations
- ☐ C. observations, activities, supplies
- ☐ D. tips, observations, supplies

19. Why do you need to keep the garbage from each restaurant separate?

- ☐ A. so that it does not get germs on it
- ☐ B. to compare the amounts of waste
- ☐ C. to figure out which restaurant has the best food
- ☐ D. to compare the cost of the meals

20. Explain what the author means by “tough choices.” Use information from the article to support your answer.

20.

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AVALANCHE!

by Lynda La Rocca



“Look out!” I shouted. “An avalanche!”

Dad turned as the huge wall of snow roared down the mountainside—straight at him. “Run!” he screamed.

My little brother, Kevin, and his friend Alan skied safely out of the path of the avalanche on their cross-country skis. But Dad and I were wearing snowshoes. We couldn’t move as quickly.

When the snow started sliding, I turned awkwardly and tried to run in my clumsy snowshoes. The next thing I knew, I felt as if I’d slammed into a brick wall. Snow covered me, filling my mouth and eyes. Gasping and coughing, I “swam” with the slide, keeping both arms in front of me, trying desperately to stay on top of the billowing mass of snow.

As suddenly as it began, the avalanche was over. I was trapped up to my neck in cold, hard snow. I couldn’t move.

Kevin and Alan hurried to me. “Dad’s gone,” Kevin sobbed. “I saw him get buried.”

“He’s not gone. Dig me out and we’ll find him.” I hoped I sounded calmer than I felt.

Kevin and Alan unhooked the small shovels we carried for emergencies like this. Avalanches are common in the rugged, high mountains of Colorado. Whenever we hike or ski into the mountains in the winter, we always come prepared.

“Hurry!” I urged. “There’s not much time!”

They worked hard, and soon I was free. My snowshoes were still on my feet. The back country was still beautiful. The snow sparkled in the sun—but now Dad was buried beneath it.

I was afraid there might be another avalanche, so I told Kevin and Alan to wait while I staggered up the mound of fallen snow.

I got out my avalanche beacon. That’s a special safety device carried by back-country skiers and snowshoers. Dad was wearing one, too. The beacon is like a little radio, with its own transmitter and receiver. The beacon transmits a steady *beep, beep* signal. The louder the beeps are, the closer the rescuer is to the person buried under the snow.

I turned on my receiver and scanned the surface quickly but carefully. Every second was important. Without air, Dad would suffocate. When I heard a faint *beep*, I moved toward the signal. My receiver showed I was getting closer.

“Here!” I shouted, dropping down and digging frantically with my hands. Kevin and Alan joined in with their shovels. Under more than a foot of snow, we uncovered the top of Dad’s head.

Dad had been buried at least fifteen minutes.

“Quick—uncover his face!” I cried. We clawed at the snow.

Dad’s eyes were closed. His gloved hand was cupped in front of his mouth and nose. That created an air pocket. But was it enough air?

“Dad!” I slapped his cheeks gently. “Wake up! Please!”

Dad's eyelids fluttered. He was alive!

"Chris," he murmured. "You're safe. Where are the others?"

"Here, Dad," Kevin said. "We're going to get you out."

And we did. Dad didn't seem hurt, but he was very cold and weak. His snowshoes were gone, so he couldn't walk in the deep snow. I used my snowshoes to make a trail. Kevin, Alan, and Dad followed. We struggled to the shelter of some pine trees.

Kevin and I made a smoky fire with pieces of damp wood. Dad needed the fire to warm up. His teeth were chattering, and he was shivering. We also hoped someone would see the smoke and rescue us. But after a few minutes, I knew we couldn't afford to wait to be rescued.

"Kevin, Alan, huddle close to Dad so he stays warm, OK?" I said. "And keep the fire burning. I'm going for help."

"Y-y-you c-c-can't go alone," Dad protested.

"I have to," I replied. "You have hypothermia." That's when the body temperature drops dangerously low. It's very serious. People can die from it. "I'll follow the trail we made coming in. I'll be all right." I had to be.

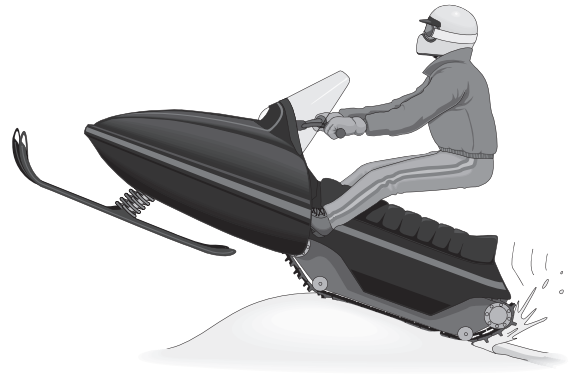
I'd trudged through the snow for almost a mile when I heard the drone of snowmobiles. "Here! Over here!" I yelled. "Help!"

Three snowmobiles came into view.

"My dad was caught in an avalanche. We dug him out, but he's cold and too tired to walk," I reported breathlessly.

"Hop on," one driver said. We sped to our campsite.

The snowmobilers turned out to be members of a search-and-rescue squad. They're trained to



help people who are stranded, injured, or lost in the mountains.

"How did you know we needed you?" I asked as they bundled Dad into blankets.

"Two people were skiing the ridge above you," a squad member explained. "Their weight probably triggered the avalanche. They saw your dad get swept away, and they went for help."

"Did they see Chris get buried, too?" Kevin asked.

"You were buried?" Dad asked quietly.

"Up to my neck," I said.

"We rescued Chris," Kevin explained.

"Yeah," Alan echoed. "And then Chris found you."

A squad member patted my back. "Nice work."

"Thank you," Dad whispered, nodding at me.

As the snowmobiles headed down the mountain, I glanced back at the gigantic snowslide. I knew that from now on, I'd look at the snowy mountains with a lot more respect. I'd be extra careful, but I'd also be more confident—thanks to our lesson on the mountain.

21. Why were Dad and Chris caught in the avalanche?

- ☐ A. Their skis did not fit well.
- ☐ B. They ran into a brick wall.
- ☐ C. Their snowshoes slowed them down.
- ☐ D. They were not prepared for emergencies.

22. What is an avalanche beacon used for?

- ☐ A. to light the way in a storm
- ☐ B. to warn people about avalanches
- ☐ C. to prevent avalanches
- ☐ D. to find people buried in snow

23. Why was it necessary to find Dad quickly?

- ☐ A. He could not breathe under the snow.
- ☐ B. Another avalanche was coming.
- ☐ C. The children could not last long in the snow.
- ☐ D. It would soon be cold and dark.

24. Why did Dad cup his hand in front of his mouth?

- ☐ A. to call for help
- ☐ B. to keep the snow out
- ☐ C. to protect his teeth
- ☐ D. to make an air pocket

25. Why did Kevin and Chris start a fire?

- ☐ A. to mark the spot of the avalanche
- ☐ B. to cook their food
- ☐ C. to provide warmth for Dad
- ☐ D. to melt ice for drinking water

26. What is hypothermia?

- ☐ A. a method of rescuing people in avalanches
- ☐ B. when a person cannot breathe
- ☐ C. a snowslide that covers people
- ☐ D. when body temperature drops dangerously low

27. What probably caused the avalanche?

- ☐ A. a heavy snowstorm
- ☐ B. the weight of people
- ☐ C. unusually warm weather
- ☐ D. fast snowmobiles

28. In order to understand this story, what is the BEST way to read it?

- ☐ A. read quickly
- ☐ B. read carefully
- ☐ C. read only the end
- ☐ D. read only the beginning

29. a. According to this story, what should you do to prepare for a possible avalanche before going on a mountain?
- b. What should you do if you are caught in an avalanche? Use information from the story to support your answer.

29a.

29b.

**English Language Arts:
Released Reading/Writing
Response Item**

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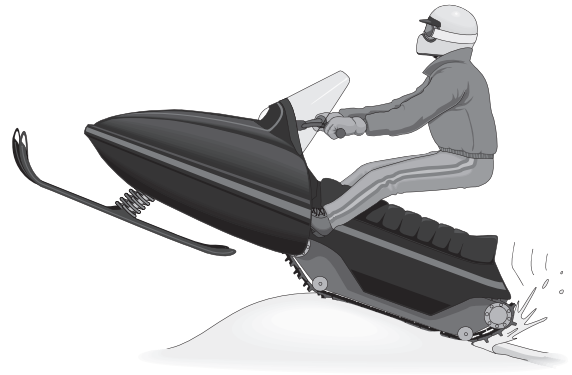
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30. Explain what Chris did to save her dad. Use details from the story in your answer.

30.

Continue your answer on the next page.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Health Education: Released Items

1. John has an important decision to make. First he wrote down the problem. Then he listed the possible choices. Next, John should
- ☐ A. consider the possible results of each choice.
 - ☐ B. make the final decision.
 - ☐ C. decide if the decision was a good choice.
 - ☐ D. restate the problem.
2. Marcus and his father take a brisk walk several times a week. This activity will MOST help to
- ☐ A. make their bodies grow fast.
 - ☐ B. decrease their risk of lung cancer.
 - ☐ C. build up their arm muscles.
 - ☐ D. strengthen their hearts and lungs.
3. Sue sits beside Bobby in class. Sue's nose begins to bleed. As she gets up to get a paper towel, blood drips onto Bobby's desk. Why should Bobby get an adult to clean it up?
- ☐ A. Blood may carry certain diseases.
 - ☐ B. Blood may stain clothing.
 - ☐ C. Blood does not bother adults.
 - ☐ D. Blood makes the desk messy.

4. Gail went to the dentist. The dentist told her that she should floss.
- Explain how Gail should floss.
 - Explain how flossing helps the teeth and gums.

4a.

4b.

5. Justin and Josh were playing basketball at noon recess. They got into an argument about the score of the game. Josh walked up to Justin and pushed him. Describe THREE things Justin could do to avoid a fight.

5.

[illegible]

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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“Should your school tell you what to wear?” (pp. A-4–A-5) as it appeared in *Zillions*, September 1998, Volume 9, Number 2. Underline added by Measured Progress.

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“Avalanche!” (pp. A-15–A-16, A-20–A-21) by Lynda La Rocca from *Highlights*, January 1998, Volume 53, Number 1. Underline added by Measured Progress.

Sources of the exercises selected for this test include: Maine State Advisory Committees, Measured Progress, and previous Maine state testing programs.